

Planning Helps Arthritis Program Map Out Blueprint for Change

Issue

Arthritis or chronic joint symptoms affects one in four American adults, making it one of the most prevalent diseases in the United States. Based on the 2002 National Health Interview Survey, 43 million Americans reported having arthritis, and this chronic disease limits everyday activities for more than 7 million people.

The South Carolina Arthritis Prevention and Control Program is one of 36 state health programs funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to address arthritis through a statewide, population-based approach. The program joined with the Arthritis Foundation and other partners across the state to design a public health response to reduce the burden of arthritis. A statewide needs assessment was conducted in 2002 as a part of the program's five-year plan.

Findings indicated that:

- Most people are not satisfied with the amount, quality, or availability of arthritis-related information;
- There are not enough services available, and some services are not helpful or affordable;
- More education about arthritis and arthritis-related conditions is needed; and
- Arthritis negatively affects every aspect of life.

Intervention

Collecting and tracking data that accurately describes the severity of arthritis in South Carolina can be a challenge, but thanks to staff funded by the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant, this is possible. With the help of the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control's state epidemiologist, an action plan was developed to provide a blueprint to address arthritis during the next five years. The plan, which follows the framework of the National Plan for Arthritis Action, includes:

- Prevalence data;
- Strategies for prevention;
- Current core capacities; and
- A call to action to reduce the impact of arthritis in the state.

The S.C. epidemiologist served as the chairperson for the state plan workgroup responsible for completing this blueprint. She provided the leadership to develop the framework for the plan and guided the workgroup through the process.

Impact

The S.C. Arthritis Program was able to use the information provided in the State Plan for Arthritis Action to secure a State-Based Examples of Network Innovation, Opportunity, and Replication (SENIOR) Grant from the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors. This grant enabled the S.C. Arthritis Program to expand the number of Arthritis Foundation Exercise Programs in the state. The Arthritis Exercise Program is an exercise program that uses gentle exercises to manage arthritis pain and increase function. The SC PACE Senior Project took the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program to two rural, underserved areas of the state where 46 people participated in Marion County and 21 participated in Bamberg County.

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